

USS Hopper stands ready to deploy

Training leads to successful completion of Final Evaluation Problem

Ens. Courtenay Rogers
USS Hopper Public Affairs

The crew of USS Hopper (DDG 70) has training at the top of their list. Training has been an ongoing effort during Hopper's preparation for her third Fifth Fleet-area deployment and since she returned from her last deployment in September 2000.

The crew worked closely with teams from ATG MIDPAC throughout 2001 to complete unit training in the basic phase of Inter Deployment Training Cycle (IDTC).

This training resulted in a successful Final Evaluation Problem (FEP) which was evaluated by Commander Destroyer Squadron Three One (COMDESRON 31).

The final piece of the training requirement was recently completed in exercises in and off the coast of San Diego. The exercises consisted of the multi-unit Comprehensive Task Unit Exercise (C2X) and the Middle Eastern Force Exercises (MEFEX).

On her way to the training evolution in early January, Hopper traveled with USS Paul Hamilton (DDG 60), USS Fletcher (DD 992) and USS Reuben James (FFG 57). Along the way, the ships conducted air defense exercises, replenishment at sea approaches, flight operations, Visit Board Search and Seizure (VBSS) operations, and many trivia competitions. The junior officers from each of the ship's wardrooms competed in two rounds of "JO Jeopardy." The JOs answered questions about "rules of engagement," "rules of the road," "Navy-wide OPTASKS" and many other important publications.

Each evening, the ships participated in night steaming packages that included Emissions Control (EC) training, communication exercises, deceptive lighting drills and non-maneuvering divtacs. The transit



ISI(SW) Marc Gobel photo

USS Camden conducts an underway replenishment with USS Hopper.

proved to be a good warm-up for future events.

Upon arrival in San Diego, members of the Abraham Lincoln Battle Group attended seminars at Tactical Training Group Pacific Fleet that included topics such as terrorism and counter-terrorism, maritime interdiction operations, rules of engagement, Tomahawk planning and execution and force protection. While many of the senior officers and enlisted attended briefs, the junior officers had the opportunity to sharpen their ship handling skills at the Marine Safety Instruction virtual trainer.

Bridge teams practiced approaches and getting underway from different piers, Underway Replenishment (UNREP) evolutions, transiting busy traffic schemes and handling shipboard casualties - all in a simulator.

The evenings in San Diego brought a well-deserved break and a good chance to enjoy the town. The Gas Lamp district, which has been com-

pared to a mini New Orleans, offered more than 200 restaurants, jazz clubs, dance clubs, and many shopping centers. Trips to Tijuana also proved to be popular.

The inport phase concluded with a Force Protection Exercise for Hopper and Reuben James. COMDESRON 7 and Fleet Technical Support Center Pacific (FTSCPAC) San Diego were instrumental in developing realistic scenarios for the ships to test force protection skills.

The members of the Force Protection Training Team conducted simulated operations including covert and overt surveillance, and defense tactics against vehicle bombs, intruders, suicide bombers, small boats and swimmers. Meanwhile, crews from Hopper and Reuben James worked together to protect their ships and heighten the awareness of all watch standers.

After the inport period, Hopper got underway and joined the USS Abraham Lincoln Battle Group for C2X in which the southern California coast-

line was transformed into a fictitious world. Country Orange (bad guys) was the main focus for the Blue forces (good guys).

The ships conducted Maritime Interdiction Operations (MIO), Leadership Interdiction Operations (LIO), Naval Surface Gunfire Support, Small Craft Action Team exercises and a simulated strait transit. In addition, each ship received many hours of plane guard duty in trail of the carrier.

The last 36 hours of the exercise featured an unscripted free play.

By the end of C2X, the battle group was working together as one entity and a mission of readiness was close at hand.

In the end, Hopper and her crew fully realized the necessity of realistic training to prepare them for any future deployments with a carrier battle group.

In keeping with the motto of the ship's namesake "Admiral Grace Hopper," the ship is now ready to "dare and do."

Fletcher excels during training exercise

CW02 Brian Faulkner
USS Fletcher

After seven weeks at sea, the crew of USS Fletcher returned home, after a successful completion of a rigorous Composite Training Unit Exercise (COMPTUEX) 2002 exercise and a challenging underway demonstration to certify their engineering teams. These milestones further prepared them for any future deployments.

Fletcher's journey began Jan. 7 with a six-day transit to San Diego. While in port, the crew attended briefs and training sessions tailored to support the upcoming three weeks of exercises and to carry the battle group through COMPTUEX and follow-on training.

The next three weeks were fast and furious with continuous battle problems flexing all capabilities of the battle group. Fletcher participated in Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW), Naval Surface Fire Support (NSFS), Visit Board Search and Seizure (VBSS), and Surface Warfare (SUW) portions of the exercise.

Fletcher's ASW team participated in multiple exercises and was recognized as one of the most proficient teams in the battle group.

Next, Fletcher was dispatched to investigate an enemy submarine's last position. Once there, Fletcher quickly gained contact and began tracking as air assets joined in. The efforts of trained sonar technicians and operations specialists held the "enemy" submarine at bay from battle group ships.

The VBSS team trained alongside the Navy special warfare forces in an exercise to execute non-compliant boardings on two suspect vessels simultaneously. The evolution provided valuable lessons learned necessary to enhance training and tactical planning for the SEALs and shipboard VBSS teams that perform this mission in the Arabian Gulf region.

Prior to returning to Pearl Harbor, the ship's engineers led the charge to successfully complete the underway demonstration. This challenging event became a ship-wide event, with all hands rallying to ensure all equipment was operational and all spaces were well-presented.

Fletcher now enters a six-week maintenance availability in preparation for the next battle group exercise and future deployment.

USS Cheyenne holds change of command

JO2 Cori Rhea
COMSUBPAC Public Affairs

Cmdr. Charles J. Doty relieved Cmdr. William C. Stacia as commanding officer of the attack submarine USS Cheyenne (SSN 773) in a traditional change of command ceremony at Naval Station Pearl Harbor Feb. 20.

"A great satisfaction comes from command," said Stacia. "There is the satisfaction of welcoming young Sailors and officers into a demanding and stressful world and helping them temper their steel to meet the challenge while watching them take Cheyenne far from this paradise to answer the call of our national defense.

"Developing that professional potential serves them well on an individual basis but it also provides depth to our team," he added. "This is a necessity when we operate these complex machines in unforgiving environments."

During Stacia's two-year tenure as commanding officer, Cheyenne

achieved many accomplishments including a successful six-month deployment to the Western Pacific and Arabian Gulf where the crew completed missions vital to national security. Cheyenne then went on to complete one of the largest and most complex selected restricted availabilities in Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard history.

For his accomplishments, Stacia was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal.

"The true measure of Cmdr. Stacia's commitment and sacrifice to this crew, the Navy and this country cannot be captured by words on a sheet of paper," said Commander Submarine Squadron Seven Capt. Glen Niederhauser, the guest speaker at the ceremony. "I am proud of what he has accomplished and appreciate his dogged determination and hard work as commanding officer of USS Cheyenne."

Stacia thanked his crew during the ceremony for their hard work over the past two years under his command.

"I asked you to take this ship into



JO2 Cori Rhea photo

Cmdr. Charles Doty (left) assumes command of the attack submarine USS Cheyenne (SSN 773) from Cmdr. William Stacia Feb. 20.

harm's way and operate safely and effectively. You've done that well," said Stacia. "I asked you to put ship, shipmate and country before self and you did that.

"You have done it all for me and at the end of the day when we are looking back, the nobility and significance of what you do shines through," he concluded.

Editorial

NCTAMS PAC Sailors teach self-esteem to Helemano students



SK2(SW) Shannon Donahue photo

An NCTAMS PAC Sailor, reads to children at Helemano Elementary during Project Self-Esteem.

SK2(SW) Shannon Donahue
NCTAMS

Classes at the Naval Computer and Telecommunications Area Master Station (NCTAMS) Pacific adopted school, Helemano Elementary, blossom with more than just a lesson learned. Only two weeks into the Project Self-Esteem program, students and military volunteers are enjoying the time spent together.

Project Self-Esteem is a six-week program that allows members of the military to interact and participate in children's education by teaching positive self-esteem.

Navy and Army volunteers split into seven teams which pair up with a grade - kindergarten through fourth - and meet once a week. The teams are responsible for the preparation and presentation of a variety of lesson plans, which include topics such as "being kind to others" and "you can always be a friend to you." With help from their puppet friend Harmony, the topics are introduced to the children in the form of stories, skits and activities to demonstrate a sense of positive self-esteem.

Project Self-Esteem's goal is to remind the children to be their own friend. And through the proj-

ect, it is in the classroom that they begin building the concept of self-esteem along with caring for others.

Teaching is a valuable tool that assists children in making appropriate choices in life. It is not enough to tell children to feel good about themselves or to follow our morals, values and standards. We must teach them how to do so through example.

As the volunteers enter the classroom in their uniforms, the children's eyes light up and smiles stretch from ear to ear. The manner in which the children look up to the soldiers and Sailors in uniform make this extraordinary experience unique. It brings the goodness of the military and ourselves into the school.

If you missed the opportunity to participate in this rewarding project, there will be other great opportunities throughout the year such as the Helemano Elementary School Fun Run 2002, March 15.

Children will compete in races and games with the teachers and Project Self-Esteem volunteers. If you are interested in helping out, contact SK1(SW) Orias or SK2(SW) Donahue at 653-0015.